

(BP)**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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March 6, 1975 **WASHINGTON** W. Barry Garrett, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4236

**Baptists Urge Religious
 Liberty in Russia, India**

By W. Barry Garrett

WASHINGTON (BP)--Baptist concern for religious liberty dramatically surfaced here March 5 as Baptist representatives visited the Russian and Indian embassies in the United States capital.

Robert S. Denny, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance presented Baptist concerns for religious liberty in Russia and India on behalf of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, the Ohio Baptist Convention (American Baptist) and the Baptist General Conference.

On his visit to the Russian embassy, Denny was accompanied by Joseph I. Chapman, executive minister of the Ohio Convention. Warren Magnuson, general secretary of the Baptist General Conference, and Donald E. Anderson, editor of *The Standard*, publication of the Baptist General Conference, joined Denny at the Indian embassy.

At the request of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, Denny delivered to the Russian embassy a letter from the committee concerning the imprisonment of Georgi Vins, "dissident" Baptist leader in Russia, and the religious liberty for all people in the U. S. S. R. James E. Wood Jr. is the executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee, maintained by nine Baptist bodies in the United States and Canada.

At the Russian embassy, the Baptists visited with Ikar I. Zavrazhnov, second secretary of the embassy of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, because Ambassador Anatoly F. Dobrynin was out of the country. It was explained that it is not the policy of the Russian embassy in the United States to receive resolutions and protests from private groups in this country. Nevertheless, Mr. Zavrazhnov agreed to read the Baptist communications and to report the visit to the ambassador when he returns.

Denny explained later that the Baptists were received courteously at both the Russian and Indian embassies. The Russian spokesman did not close the door to further discussion but said the possibility exists that they may talk to the Baptist World Alliance around the first of April.

The concern for religious liberty in India expressed by the Baptist General Conference representatives was stimulated by reported persecution of Christians in Arunachal Pradesh, India.

The Indian embassy said that it was unaware of the religious persecutions to which their attention was being called but that it would definitely look into the matter. Trilokinath N. Kaul is the ambassador from India to the United States. An educational and cultural attache at the Indian embassy received the Baptist delegation.

The Ohio Baptist resolution and the letter from the Baptist Joint Committee were triggered by the recent conviction and imprisonment of Vins, secretary of the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, for violation of certain Soviet laws.

The Ohio resolution was presented to the Ohio Baptist Convention last October and was unanimously approved by the board of trustees of the convention on December 10, 1974. The resolution protested "cruel treatment of political prisoners for worshipping God, possessing Scriptures and other religious literature, baptizing believers and preaching the gospel of Christ."

The Ohio Baptists requested the Russian government immediately to release and pardon these prisoners. They claimed that, according to the modified Russian Constitution

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and article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights approved by the United Nations, "these Soviet Christians have not violated the law."

The letter from the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs to the Russian ambassador was more moderate in tone but equally insistent upon "religious liberty for all people of all faiths or of no faith in all parts of the world."

"We profoundly lament the abridgment of religious liberty, whether applied to Baptists, Jews, or any other religious bodies," the Baptist Joint Committee wrote. "While we may not be in agreement with all the religious views and practices of particular Baptists or Jews, we defend the right of all people to believe in and practice religion without interference from government. In fact, we believe that one role of government is to guarantee the right of religious liberty of the people rather than to restrict that liberty."

According to reports from India, 37 churches and 25 dwellings have been burned, 74 other dwellings damaged affecting 343 families, 53 persons physically assaulted, 16 granaries burned, 162 other granaries destroyed or looted, and 463 head of livestock and 1,273 fowl looted.

The Persecution in Arunachal Pradesh reportedly has been directed solely toward the Christian community.

In its presentation to the Indian embassy, the Baptist General Conference spokesmen pointed out that the Indian Constitution guarantees religious liberty for all the Indian constituency. They appealed to India to protect the religious liberty of the Indian citizens.

The Christians in Arunachal Pradesh are reportedly not the product of missionary activity. Rather, citizens of that state, visiting elsewhere, brought back the Christian message themselves.

Magnuson and Anderson pointed out that "the Arunachal Pradesh Christians have not been coerced to leave their local religion to become Christians: they have become Christians voluntarily, and should have the freedom to remain Christians without harassment and without persecution."

The Baptist General Conference, originally composed of immigrants from Sweden, is a fellowship of 115,000 members in 700 churches in Canada and the United States. It is active in both the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and the Baptist World Alliance.

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Canada, USA Differ In
Church-State Approach

Baptist Press
3/6/75

By Stan Hasteley

WASHINGTON (BP)--A Canadian Baptist leader pointed to major differences between church-state relations in Canada and the United States in an address to the semi-annual session of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs here.

The Baptist body also heard its director of research services report that the deductibility of gifts to churches and other charities is not in jeopardy in the foreseeable future. The committee also passed resolutions relating to the right to privacy, equal opportunity and full employment, and the distribution of grain overseas.

The Baptist Joint Committee is a denominational agency in the nation's capital composed of representatives from nine conventions and conferences in the United States and Canada. It is the vehicle used by those groups to "act in the field of public affairs."

Harry A. Renfree, executive minister of the Baptist Union of Western Canada and a representative of the Baptist Federation of Canada on the joint committee, said a major difference in approaching church-state questions in Canada is dictated by the loosely-knit confederation of provinces in that country.

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Although the country has a national bond through a prime minister, House of Commons and Senate, each of Canada's 10 provinces is relatively free to forge its own system of government.

As a consequence, the Canadian Baptist leader said, each province chooses its own manner of relating to its school system, resulting in wide differences in church-state patterns. Most Canadian provinces, including Quebec, Ontario and Nova Scotia, provide tax funds for nonpublic schools, while only two, Manitoba and British Columbia, forbid such aid.

In all 10 of the provinces, however, Bible readings and the recitation of the Lord's Prayer are "either obligatory or permitted," Renfree said.

Renfree also noted that while only three percent of the Canadian population is Baptist, the denomination's impact on public affairs has gone far beyond that proportion.

In another session, the joint committee heard John W. Baker, associate director in charge of research services for the agency say that a highly placed source on the powerful committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives recently assured him that the day "will never come" when gifts to churches and other charities are not treated as tax deductible.

Baker raised the issue, he said, because of comments made recently to a group of Baptist students by Rep. John B. Conlan (R., Ariz.). Conlan reportedly told the group that pressures are mounting to repeal the provision in the Internal Revenue code which allows such gifts to be deducted from federal income taxes.

Conlan, who says he belongs to an "independent Bible church," told the students that the threat to tax deductible gifts stems from the rise of secularism.

Baker, concerned about the congressman's remarks, talked with a well-placed staff member on the tax-writing ways and means panel and was assured that Conlan was incorrect. He said further that virtually no chance exists for the removal of deductibility of gifts to churches and charities, either now or in the future. He also said that congressmen on ways and means are aware that taking a position favoring the removal of deductibility would be politically unfeasible.

In other actions, the Baptist Joint Committee adopted resolutions calling for the protection of the individual's right to privacy, equal opportunity and full employment, and the allocation of more grain to the hungry abroad.

The statement on privacy described that right as "the foundation of civil and religious liberty" and appealed to the President and Congress both to limit and standardize the collection and dissemination of necessary intelligence data and to "exercise diligent oversight" of agencies which collect such information.

After hearing an address by Rep. Augustus F. Hawkins (D. Cal.), calling for emergency government action to provide work for the nation's unemployed, the joint committee adopted a statement supporting "equal opportunity and full employment for all able and willing to work." The resolution urged both government and private business to work toward that end.

The statement on hunger commended the governments of Canada and the United States for recent actions providing increased allocations of grain for distribution to the hungry in other nations. However, it urged the two governments "to extend their leadership" in helping meet the world food crisis.

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Texas Baptists Name Isbell
To Direct Lay Ministries

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3/6/75

DALLAS (BP)--W. J. (Doc) Isbell, director of the Baptist Men's division at the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, has been named director of lay ministries for the statewide Texas Baptist Men's organization here.

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Isbell, who had been with the Brotherhood Commission since 1968, held one of 12 staff posts eliminated, effective March 7, by the SBC agency in the face of a growing financial deficit. The deficit exceeded \$146,000 over the past two years.

Commission Executive Director Glendon McCullough, who said he and agency staff members have been working to help terminated employees find other jobs, reports that the staff cut and other reduced spending will eliminate the deficit within 18 months.

Isbell, a graduate of Auburn University, practiced veterinary medicine, 1943-55, in Alabama before becoming that state's Brotherhood secretary. He served there for about 12 years.

Robert E. Dixon, executive secretary of Texas Baptist Men, auxiliary to the Baptist General Convention of Texas, said Isbell's addition "will help Texas Baptist Men strengthen its objective to train laymen to share their Christian witness in their everyday lives as well as in special campaigns around the world."

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers.

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SBC Evangelists
Set Annual Session

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MIAMI BEACH (BP)--The Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists will hold its annual meeting here, Wednesday, June 11, between sessions of the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

The program, featuring addresses by three evangelists and special music, will be preceded by a concert at 12:45 p.m. in the South Hall of the Miami Beach Convention Center. The program begins at 1:30 p.m.

Paul Jackson, an evangelist from Little Rock; Wayne Bristow, an evangelist from Lubbock; and Hyman Appelman, an evangelist from Kansas City, Mo., will bring major addresses.

SBC President Jaroy Weber of Lubbock and Bill Hogue, evangelism director, SBC Home Mission Board, Atlanta, will also be on the program.

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Annuity Board Names
Insurance Services Director

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3/6/75

DALLAS (BP)--John Dudley, 32, has been promoted from acting director to director of insurance services for the Southern Baptist Convention Annuity Board here, according to the board's president, Darold H. Morgan.

Dudley had served as acting director for nearly a year. He joined the Annuity Board in 1972 as associate director of the board's insurance services.

Before coming to the Annuity Board, Dudley was employed as national accounts coordinator, assistant to the manager and assistant manager of Blue Cross-Blue Shield of Texas, with offices in Dallas.

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